

Testimony IN SUPPORT of House Bill No. 6578 - An Act Concerning Participation in the Electoral Process;
and IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill No. 1017- An Act Concerning Election Administration

Dear Senator Mae Flexer (Co-Chair), Representative Dan Fox (Co-Chair), Senator Rob Sampson (Ranking Member), Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco (Ranking Member), and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee:

My name is Tracy Bowens, I am a voter from Hamden. Passing HB 6578, but with needed improvement, is extremely important to me because not only codifying but also expanding Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to other state agencies is a common-sense reform that saves taxpayer money and helps increase democratic participation.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) will enhance the security and integrity of our elections by eliminating outdated addresses and duplicative registrations through an automatic process—which will deliver the most accurate voter rolls to cities and towns.

77% of Connecticut voters support Automatic Voter Registration in a recent Secure Democracy public opinion poll. Across the country, localities have saved an average of about \$3.54 in labor costs per registration by moving from a paper to an electronic method. Nineteen states have versions of AVR.

In regards to SB 1017, Connecticut has the most stringent criminal disenfranchisement laws in the Northeast, and it is the only state in the region that still prohibits those on parole from casting a ballot. Furthermore, felony disenfranchisement laws became widespread in the United States after the Civil War as a way for former Confederate states to circumvent Reconstruction amendments and stamp out Black political power. 20 states allow people on parole to vote and just two weeks ago New York's state senate voted to restore voting rights to those on parole. Preventing formerly incarcerated people from voting undermines good faith attempts at reintegration, and artificially decreases the voting power of the communities in which people on parole reside.

Expanding automatic voter registration and restoring rights to the disenfranchised is the right thing to do, it is the moral thing to do. To do otherwise is to place political calculus above the rights of our citizens and exposes a cynical disregard for democracy. Therefore, I urge you to pass HB 6578 but with expansion of Automatic Voter Registration beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles to other state agencies—additionally I urge you to pass SB 1017.

Thank you,

Tracy Bowens
Hamden

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